

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Tuesday 17 March 2020
Venue: Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, introductions and declarations of interest

Cllr Morris Bright welcomed members and highlighted that while online board meetings were new to the Local Government Association, it was now more important than ever for the work of the board to continue.

Ian Hughes updated members on the work the LGA is doing to support the demands that have been placed on Councils with recent events. Members should feedback to the LGA on what is going on within their communities, on an ongoing basis.

Members made the following comments:

- Scrutiny functions in councils will struggle, without changes in how councils can run.
- The social care sector will struggle without an increase in staff. Children's social care workers will see a reduction in the flow of new cases over this period, but this is likely to mean cases are under-detected rather than reduced. Schools will also be struggling in this climate.
- Local businesses will struggle to claim insurance over informal closures by government.
- End of life services are currently at capacity and this will only become a bigger pressure as the months go on.
- The Agricultural sector will struggle with getting labour in for seasonal work.
- The voluntary sector needs celebrating for the current hard work they are doing.

Cllr Rachel Baily declared an interest in Item 4, Councils role in the future of rural land management.

2 Growth funding and fiscal devolution to non-metropolitan areas

Joe Fyans, Localis, gave a presentation on research commissioned by the Board into fiscal devolution to non-metropolitan areas. He highlighted international examples of fiscal autonomy and decentralised growth funding from Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, which draws on interviews with key stakeholders from each country to better understand how these systems work in practice as well as the lessons for local government in non-metropolitan England.

Members made the following comments

- How does the commissioned research relate to the Devolution White Paper?

Officers Responded

- The research will help shape the LGA's ongoing work into further devolution and will be shared with the devolution task force for comment.
- The final report will be sent to Lead Members for clearance.

Decision

Members noted the findings of the report.

3 UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Growth Funding

Jasbir Jhas gave members an update on the current position on UKSPF and growth-related funding in the run up to the Spending Review and the Devolution White Paper.

Members made the following comments

- Members made the following comments:
- Welcomed the report as a way of strengthening our position on UKSPF. It is critical that we move to a position that local and combined authorities play a lead role in designing, prioritising, commissioning and have oversight of the UKSPF and other growth funding.
- Themes in paragraph 8 demonstrate why local and combined authorities should be central to design and commissioning. Must move toward a multi agency approach.
- Agreed that competitive bidding is not the way forward, and that there must be room for supporting innovation both nationally and locally. Clearer articulation of definition of 'local need' is required.
- Need to do more to get this message across to MPs.

Officers responded

- Being very clear about how local authorities should be taking the lead on energy but ensuring the LEPs have a role. Climate change is an issue that the LGA is taking leading on.

Decision

Members agreed the principles for the UKSPF and wider growth funding.

4 Councils role in the future of rural land management

Daniel Shamplin-Hall detailed the work that the LGA has undertaken on the future role of councils in the management of rural land. Daniel summarised the current policy context and outlined the opportunities for the Board to continue to influence this agenda.

Members made the following comments:

- Should this decision be taken before meeting with the National Farmers Union (NFU)?
- The land model will be important in reducing the carbon impact that the rural economies take part in
- Flooding and renumeration around this are letting down those with rural land.
- Other landowners need to be considered as part of this review.

Officers responded

- The response will be passed onto colleagues in the NFU for comment.

- There is a risk in transitioning over to new system, especially when farmers are at the bottom of the economic system.
- Cross boarder working needs to be raised as an issue
- Extreme Weather conditions will be raised with minister as a growing issues.

Decision

Members agreed the engagement strategy.

5 Freeports consultation report

Daniel Gardiner outlined the Government's objectives for freeports, the policy proposals captured in the freeports consultation, and the proposed options for identifying freeport locations. Daniel Gardiner invited members to comment on the consultation and feedback received will be used to inform the LGA's consultation response.

Members made the following comments:

- The location of freeports relative to other transport hubs will be important
- How will the freeport providers be held to account, who do they answer to?
- The environmental impact of increased traffic needs to be considered.

Officers responded

- The infrastructure around the freeports will be important for transport and businesses.
- Members should ensure they continue to feed back their concerns.
- The final response will be cleared by lead members before the response is submitted in late June.

Decision

Members noted the work that has been done around the Freeports consultation.

6 District and County Council Collaboration

Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence gave a presentation on the interim findings of the Board-commissioned research into good practice examples of collaboration between district and county councils.

Members made the following comments

- Trust between councils is important when considering a basis for new collaboration.
- The work that Shared Intelligence has been doing on this research has been good and could have far reaching implications for local government.

Phil Swann responded:

- Relationships between councils works well where ground work has been done on building good favour between all the parties.

Decision

Members noted the work on District and county council collaboration

Officers responded

- The final report will be brought to the June board for clearance.

7 **Rural Digital Connectivity**

Daniel Shamplin-Hall provided members with an update on the national digital connectivity policy context and proposes a set of actions for the Board to pursue over the remaining political cycle.

Members made the following comments

- We need to be clear that any future plans need to start with those areas that already with poor digital connection
- The local member needs to be consulted when new connectivity infrastructure is planned.
- When digital connectivity is said to be improving across the county, rural communities are often ignored.
- The mobile phone providers need to be held to account further for poor service and not rolling out better Connectivity.

Officers responded

- These comments will be taken forward Ofcom in further meetings.
- We will be inviting Building Digital UK back to a future board.

Decision

Members approved the new Ofcom Chief Executive being invited to a future board meeting.

18 **Minutes of the last meeting**

Members **agreed** to the notes of the previous People & Places Board that took place on Tuesday 17 March 2020.